



Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 15, 2024, from 10am – 12pm

Virtual Meeting over Zoom

Transcripts available upon request

ATTENDEES

Council Members *(grayed out people are absent) (quorum = 5)*

Steven Birkby, <i>Chairperson</i>	<i>Member who is Deaf and represents an organization of people who are Deaf</i>
Joelynn Ball, <i>Vice Chair</i>	<i>Member who is an interpreter</i>
Valerie Player, <i>Executive Committee</i>	<i>Member who is a parent of a child who is deaf</i>
Emilie Banasiak.....	<i>Hard of hearing and represents an organization of people who are hard of hearing</i>
Sonny Cabbage.....	<i>Member who is Deaf</i>
Matthew McGraw.....	<i>Member who is Hard of Hearing and over the age of 60</i>
Dr. Abe Vore.....	<i>Member who is an audiologist</i>
Dr. Jacob Robison.....	<i>Member who is a physician</i>
Vacant.....	<i>Member who is a parent of a child who is hard of hearing</i>

Ex-officio Members

Steven Snow.....	<i>Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH)</i>
Brian Darcy.....	<i>Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind (IESDB)</i>
Kelli Toohill.....	<i>Public Utilities Commission/Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service (Idaho TRS)</i>
Erin Olsen.....	<i>Idaho Commission on Aging (ICG)</i>
Terry Gammel.....	<i>Idaho Department of Labor (DOL)</i>
Miranda Nelson.....	<i>Idaho Sound Beginnings (ISB)</i>
Vacant.....	<i>Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)</i>
Chynna Hirasaki.....	<i>Idaho State Department of Education (SDE)</i>
Tabitha Edwards.....	<i>Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses (DOPL)</i>
Brett T. DeLange.....	<i>Office of the Attorney General (AG)</i>

CDHH Staff

Steve Snow.....	<i>Executive Director</i>
Dawn Wells.....	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Leah McElwee.....	<i>Executive Interpreter</i>
Tara Adams.....	<i>Human Services Program Specialist</i>
Jahaira Faber.....	<i>Communications & Outreach Coordinator</i>

Other Attendees: Lauren Seale (interpreter), Zoey Lambert (ITP student), Ray Lockary (community)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council member, Sonny Cabbage, called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM and welcomed everyone. Introductions and representations were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 20, 2024

Minutes as drafted were reviewed and approved.

MOTION - Dr. Abe Vore moved to approve the September 20, 2024, minutes; Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Steve Snow

The Director apologizes for missing the last board meeting, it was the first one in 17 years.

At the National Level

1. As Elections are over, all eyes are on the transition from the current administration to the new administration.
2. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted new rules for Bluetooth requirements, going into effect October 18, 2024 with a 2 year grace period.
 - a. 100% of all mobile smartphones must be compatible with hearing aids
 - b. Requires Bluetooth coupling compatibility to ensure more universal connectivity between smartphones and hearing aids, including over-the-counter hearing aids.
 - c. Mobile handsets must meet volume control benchmarks to increase audio without distortion
 - d. Point of sale labeling requirements will clarify if the smartphone is certified as hearing aid compatible.
3. As of June 24, 2024, Department of Justice, Rehabilitation Act Section 508 now requires all government websites including apps, to be accessible to those with disabilities. Many websites are not currently accessible to individuals who are deaf or blind. This includes social media for government pages, political platforms, and campaigning. Much of the recent campaigning messages were not accessible and without captions.

At the State Level

1. After elections we have 18 new legislators.
2. Legislators meet in January however we don't know what the focus is for the upcoming year. Usually we have some kind of idea, but not this time. There was a large surplus for 2022-2023 and a smaller surplus for 2023-2024 which will go to homeowner tax relief.

At the Community Level

1. The iPad program is again ready to launch after several failed attempts. The Cares Act Funding provided 50 iPads to deaf and hard of hearing that did not have access to communication and relay calls. ITS put that on hold 2 ½ years ago. Since then, we have tried to distribute the iPads a few times and continued to run into bugs when then community members had to return the iPads. Hopefully we are really ready this time.
2. This recent election CDHH worked with Disability Rights Idaho with their voting initiative to ensure all individuals with disabilities are aware of their right to vote. There were some changes in what type of photo ID was accepted at polling centers and DRI had a huge campaign around that. Through every election CDHH has seen the challenges that arise within the deaf and hard of hearing communities. We had many requests to explain Prop 1 and we had to be careful with a nonpartisan explanation. CDHH is hopeful for funding from SOS to contract out accessibility for the next elections.
3. Funding requests are capped at 3%.
 - a. This impacts CDHH since we have more deaf staff than before and that means more accommodation needs. CDHH requested \$30,000 in communication access funding, which is over that 3%.
 - b. The building that we lease for the CDHH office sold and our rate of \$11.77 sf is increasing. The new owner is asking \$20 sf. DFM will not allocate funding for that but there is still 7 months to negotiate or look for another space.
 - c. Another option is moving to the Chinden Campus which we would be able to afford at \$13.50 sf but the space needs renovation. Those costs would range from \$150-\$300 sf which is not in the CDHH budget even for a onetime expense. The governor is encouraging state agencies to move to the Chinden Campus so we could ask if the state would approve funding for the renovation costs.
4. Vocational Rehabilitation has moved into OOS, Order of Selection while they are working under a deficit. This does not affect CDHH even though we are technically housed under VR for some services.
 - a. VR was undergoing an investigation for a deficit of \$4 million, which is now believed to be more like \$10-\$12 million.
 - b. VR receives state and federal funding in a match process but because of some resistance to bring them out of this deficit, VR has had to turn to OOS process to help them get out of the deficit. They must run on their current budget and serve only a limited number of clients while they are also undergoing several audits.
 - c. OOS means if 2 people apply for services at the same time, the one with the most significant disability is given priority and placed on the wait list for services first. Nationwide data shows that the OOS process negatively affects deaf individuals. Hearing loss is considered to be less impactful to a person's quality of living, but we know communication is everything, especially in employment.

- d. VR attorneys have advised VR employees that even if they sign, they cannot have direct communication with their clients. They must hire a sign language interpreter. This is a misinterpretation of the law. Unfortunately, this has had a very negative impact on the community. There are some counselors that do know sign language and this hurts services provided by VR.
- e. Abe noticed in his audiology practice that people are not being approved by VR for new hearing aids, wondering what is going on.
- f. Erin said her administrator, Judy Taylor, is also the temporary director for VR until about March 13th and there is currently a list for services waiting on next year's funding. Right now it is a first come, first serve with prioritization based on level of disability.
5. The Idaho Fair Housing Council (IFHC) will work with those who have been discriminated against when seeking housing. CDHH and IFHC are working on how to streamline the process for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and provide training.
 - a. Housing scams
 - b. Denied housing because of their disability
6. CDHH spent a week in North Idaho meeting with the community, joining the Walk4ASL and DeafFest event, we visited the Disability Action Center which is the Center for Independent Living that serves North Idaho.
7. Domestic Violence Advocacy Program has launched. Updates from Tara Adams:
 - a. Tara attended several roundtables with ICDVVA, one of which was in North Idaho, Pocatello, East Idaho, and Treasure Valley. Those roundtables included the nonprofits, organizations, and agencies that receive funding from ICDVVA and provide services.
 - b. Tara educated those groups on the program, community needs, and how to provide services when they encounter these deaf survivors.
 - c. These organizations can go through ICDVVA to cover costs of interpreters and streamline the process to provide deaf advocates and interpreters.
 - d. Partnership with Network Interpreting Services allows ICDVVA to request interpreters from a list of vetted and approved interpreters so they don't have to do the vetting themselves.
 - e. Nine deaf advocates went through a training 1 ½ years ago but many feel they need refresher trainings which needs funding.
 - f. If a deaf victim needs services, they have access to a deaf advocate however if one is not available, the hearing advocates need to know there are interpreters available as a secondary option.
 - g. This program has been added to National Hotline services so when deaf individuals search for services, they can find our information.
 - h. For several years, data will be collected on how often these services are being utilized by deaf and hard of hearing clients, so we know if the program needs expansion. No personal information will be collected.
8. Amazon requested changes to the Idaho license law. The Governor's office recognized CDHH as the experts on this law and referred to Amazon to us. Amazon's attorneys have a few changes they would like to see in the license law which will be discussed at a later date.
9. LINC has a relationship with the Idaho Department of Transportation, therefore CDHH and LINC are working together to ask for the Idaho Driver's Education Study Guide in ASL. There is a Spanish test and Spanish study guide but ASL only has a test accessible to those that use sign language, no study guide.
10. CDHH has 2 vacant seats as Joelynn Ball has stepped down from the "interpreter" representative on the board and Gretchen Fors has stepped down from the "parent with a child who is hard of hearing" representative on the board.
11. The Holiday Families gift drive nominations have closed and wish lists will be sent out soon.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS

Brian Darcy, Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind

- Students spent months planning and building the Raptor Manor Halloween event which was held in the gym. We had 600 people coming through. There was a Harry Potter experience for the little kids. This event earned about \$7,500.
- October 20th was the annual Boise Zoo event for Treasure Valley deaf and blind community and that event had 7,085 people come through the gates.
- IESDB Outreach will have Santa make an appearance again in all regions. The Treasure Valley event will take place December 7th from 10a-2p at the Idaho State Children's Museum. Free ticket to tour the museum but pre-registration is required. See Facebook for registration information.

- Treasure Valley Day School option continues to be explored. Steve Snow and Sonny Cabbage are also on that committee. This would be direct instruction for DHH kids Pre-5th grades and would not impact campus attendance in Gooding as the need in Tresure Valley is great enough to fill that day school
- Campus construction is moving forward. Currently there is a waiting list for students that need to attend ISDB but there is not enough residential space for them. There has been approval for 2 new cottages but only 1 has been funded so far. Robert Sivage (DeafBlind) from Deaf Space Architecture is one of the architects on the team. 6 design teams applied and 5 met the qualifications of having significant deaf and blind experience on the team.
- New parking log next May
- New Bus Barn will be built to store busses overnight. This will give the kids warm buses during the winter. It will be a white barn in remembrance of the old white barn that stood on campus.

Erin Olsen, Idaho Commission on Aging

- More discussions about hearing and vision loss for aging individuals. There is not specific funding for that but ICOA needs to be addressed and funding provided.
- Jahaira Faber presented to the board and was informative on the needs to provide access.

Kelly Toohill, Public Utilities Commission/Idaho Telecommunications Relay Services

- Visual Assisted Speech to Speech services used to be provided but somehow in the new contract that service was not included. We are in the process of adding that service back into the contract. There is a population of people who were utilizing that service.
- Hamilton Relay was able to provide a user list of cities where relay and captions calls are being made from. That report will be given to Director Snow as a part of our advisory council. That gives us an idea of who still uses those analog services.
- Affordability Connection Program (ACP) was eliminated but there is a chance it could come back someday. There is another option Idaho Telecommunications Service Assistance Program for those who are eligible (Medicaid, SNAP) could qualify for a \$2.50 discount on monthly local or wireless service.

Terry Gammel, Idaho Department of Labor

- IDOL has had some internal program restructuring with the apprenticeship program and staff. We wanted to wait for those changes before resuming discussions with Steve Snow about that apprenticeship realm for deaf and hard of hearing.
 - Steve Snow mentioned he had been discussing the apprenticeship program with Elaine Zabinski and she would like to be involved with that program.
 - Vocational Rehabilitation going into OOS, Order of Selection will likely create an uptick of those seeking services from IDOL
- Hired a new supervisor for the apprenticeship program and a new program manager as of this week.
- Working on internal projects and closing out quarter end things.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Signing Santa event is on December 7th from 10a-2p at the Idaho State Children's Museum. This is a free event however, registration is required. See Facebook for more information.

ADJOURNED

MOTION – Sonny Cabbage moved to adjourn; Matt McGraw seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, January 16, 2025 Capital Meet & Greet and Quarterly Board Meeting